

# critical digest



139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY  
EL 5-6894 T. M. Kraus

May 22, 1961 Vol XIII No 9 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Service - Published 52 weeks a year - \$25 per year

## This Week in NYC

Several steps were taken to bring down theatre ticket prices. Kean the new musical starring Alfred Drake due Nov 2 at Broadway will have 550 balcony seats available at \$1 each performance. Current price for most top balcony tickets is \$2.90. Fiorello! current tenant of the 1900 seat Broadway cut its ticket price to a \$5 mid-week and \$7.50 week-end top. Advance sales have averaged \$7500 daily. The 17 Shubert owned theatres will ban "twofer" discount tickets next season, except for productions which have run longer than 18 months. John Shubert stated that he was taking this move because of the excessive number of discount tickets printed and because of the methods of distribution. Theatre owner hopes that the success of Fiorello! at the lower prices will encourage more producers to do the same.

## Plays

Advise and Consent closed prior to announced switch of Kevir McCarthy to Richard Kiley role. Tour opens Sept 25 in Baltimore... The Happiest Girl in the World has dropped Mon evening performance and now plays Wed, Thur, Sat matinees... Wildcat to vacation Jul 3-29... The Hostage may return to NY in fall... Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole new play by James and William Goldman due Oct 2 at Morosco with Darren McGavin and 22 year old Peter Fonda... Kwamina to be directed by Robert Lewis, who replaced Tony Richardson... Triple threat Dore Schary will adapt, stage and co-produce the play For Special Occasions, based on his own forthcoming novel.

## Broadway Business

Variety reports drop by most shows with exception of the prize winner All the Way Home which increased for the fourth week. Sellouts at Camelot, Carnival, Mary Mary and Sound of Music.

## NYC Calendar

Mandingo-Lyceum 5/22. Billy Baxter-Edward Friedman present new play by Jack Kirkland, based on novel by Kyle Ostodd, directed by Louis Macmillian with Franchot Tone, Brooke Hayward, Rockne Tarkington. Postponed from 5/17.

A Call on Kuprin-Broadhurst 5/25. Robert Griffith-Harold Prince present new play by Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee, directed by George Abbott with Jeffrey Lynn, Eugene Leonovitch, George Voskovec.

## Players

Bob Fosse, Shelia Bond, Carol Bruce, Harvey Stone featured in Pal Joey May 31 at City Center... Betty Jane Watson signed as standby for Lucille Ball, Wildcat... Dick Gautier, Bye Bye Birdie, out due to injured ankle... Elizabeth Lawrence replaced Lenka Peterson, All the Way Home who moved up to leading role to replace Colleen Dewhurst... Virginia Gilmore, James Hurst, Elaine Stritch, Pat Hardy to be in Sail Away new Noel Coward musical Oct 5.

## Playwrights

Dramatists Guild to vote on May 24 on new one year contract. It allows cuts to 1/2 royalty for 17 weeks until investors paid back on a play, 30 weeks on a musical. New pact would also grant producers of Broadway production a 40% share of author's royalties of future Off Broadway productions within 5 years.

## Award Dept

Theatre World 1960-61 awards of "Most Promising Personalities" included--Ron Husmann, Tenderloin; June Harding, Cry of the Raindrop; Joan Hackett, Call Me By My Rightful Name; Bruce Yarnell, Happiest Girl in the World; Nancy Dussault, Do Re Mi; Dennis Cooney, Every Other Evil; Joyce Bulifant, Whisper to Me; James MacArthur, Invitation to a March.

## Off Broadway

Shows that closed include --- Ladies Night in the Turkish Bath after 48 performances, Gallows Humor after 40, Call Me By My Rightful Name after 127, and The Decameron... Twin-bill of The Zoo Story and Krapp's Last Tape to continue... Evenings with Chekhov to move from Key Theatre to Actors Playhouse... Noontide is new name of Paul Claudel's And the Child is a Woman due Jun 1 at Theatre Marquee... Hamlet at Phoenix extended run to Jun 18, which will give Donald Madden the record for American born title players in NYC with 109 performances... Clandestine on the Morning Line new play by Josh Greenfield to be presented Oct 5 by John Weems-Robert Buccolo, directed by Allen Davis 3d.

## Theatre TV Notes

CBS TV to present The Power and the Glory production to be taped May 30-Jun 4 directed by Marc Daniels with Laurence Olivier, Julie Harris, Mildred Dunnock, Patty Duke, Roddy McDowell... "Playwrights at Work" TV series of 10 films being made in NYC by National Educational Television to feature interviews with 10 playwrights and scenes from their new plays.

## Theatre Film Notes

The Miracle Worker film to start production in NYC May 31 with Anne Bancroft, Patty Duke, Victor Jory, Arthur Penn director... Becket film to co-star Alec Guinness and Laurence Olivier... Night Circus film to star Jane Fonda.

## Play Diary

Next Week- Pal Joey- City Center 5/31... Diakos-Fashion Institute 6/2.

# DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

**Porgy and Bess**- City Center- 5/18. 7 pro-unanimous-  
filed on NY City Center Light Opera Co revival of George Ger-  
shwin-Du Bose Heyward-Ira Gershwin musical staged by Will-  
iam Ball with William Warfield, Leesa Foster, Rawn Spearman,  
James Randolph. Six notices were raves, with only Herald Trib-  
une critic having minor criticisms on direction. Many thought  
current cast was best ever seen in NY, all gave equal credit to  
extra large 40 piece orchestra conducted by Julius Rudel and  
the choral work directed by William Jonson. Taubman, Times,  
lauded revival that has the force and excitement of a new pro-  
duction, vivid and imaginative revival of a notable achievement  
of the American musical theatre. Chapman, News, loved the won-  
derful production which on each return seems to grow in artist-  
ry, one of the really splendid events of the theatrical year. Cole-  
man, Mirror, approved of stirring revival, at outstanding pro-  
duction at any price, and a rare bargain at \$3.95 top. Johnson,  
Post, felt production exhibited a stellar singing cast, probably  
the best ever, Ball's staging a miracle with primary emphasis  
on the music. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, applauded moving  
and magnificent version with impressive groupings and move-  
ments by the director. McClain, Journal American, praised  
the magnificent revival, exceptionally well sung, emerging as  
an infinitely more impressive offering of a classic of our time.  
In mild vote of approval Crist, Herald Tribune, credited trium-  
phant music and superior ensemble work for supplying drama  
that direction lacks in fire and fury. Fault is blamed on Ball's  
returning to the "opera" concept using all the theatrical offen-  
sive staging devices of opera.

**A Taste of Honey**- Booth 5/16. 3 pro- Times, Post,  
World Telegram & Sun-filed on Shelagh Delaney's play  
with three major cast changes. Play opened Oct 21 to 5  
pros and 2 cons-News, Mirror. Frances Cuka replaced  
Joan Plowright, Hermione Baddeley replaced Angela Land-  
sbury, Frederick Combs replaced Andrew Ray. Reviewers  
agreed that new players were excellent but felt that still  
first rate play now appears harsher and less humorous.  
Calt, Times, found that while the new performances were  
admirable and that the play still offers a touching and stir-  
ring theatrical experience, the over-all tone has changed  
making the play appear harsher and colder in contrast to  
its former quicksilver and gayer qualities. Herridge, Post,  
found English drama still enthralling, but quite different;  
the play now seems more sordid and less tender, more  
bitter and less optimistic. Post drama editor still rated  
it one of the most honest and freshest dramas on Broad-  
way. Aston, WTS, approved of new players with a slight  
reservation on Cuka's and Baddeley's accents which still  
must be tuned.

**Many Loves**- Living Theatre ( 530-6th Av) 5/15.  
1 pro- Aston, WTS- filed on return of the William Carlos  
Williams drama to repertory of Living Theatre prior to  
the group's European festival trek. Rave notice praised  
direction by Julian Beck and entire company. The pro-  
duction bristles with inventiveness, imagination, humor and  
zip, and the company is swollen with talent.

**Lighthearted**- Phase 2 ( 302 Bleecker St ) 5/16  
1 pro- Morello, WTS-filed on new coffee house revue with  
sketches and lyrics by Marvin Schofer and music by Bob  
Waxman with Tom Kelley, Judy Martin, Claudette Suther-  
land, Carey Sutlive. Buoyant new offering is a breezy  
joust with contemporary foolishness.

**The Grand Duke**- Greenwich Mews ( 141 W 13) 5/11.  
6 pro- Times, Herald Tribune, Mirror, Post, Journal Amer-  
ican, World Telegram & Sun- filed on 1896 Gilbert & Sulli-  
van operatta given its first NY professional performance  
by the American Savoyards, directed by Dorothy Raedler,  
presented by Raedler-David Lipsky-Stella Holt for one  
week only. Affirmative voters split on whether the piece  
was first or second rate G & S, but all agreed it was given  
a lively first rate production. Raymond Allen, Mary Ann  
Staffa, Sally Birkhead shared singing-acting honors. Calt  
Times, enjoyed its rich vein of fun and good tunes, a grace-  
ful and melodious romp which he hopes will be repeated.  
Kupferberg, Herald Tribune, approved of tasteful produc-  
tion of 14th and final G & S work which has rhymes that are  
rather mechanical and music that is mostly perfunctory.  
Stern, Mirror, enjoyed enthusiastic and sparkling perform-  
ances which cover failings of familiar story line. Herr-  
idge, Post, rated it a curiosity which G & S fans won't want  
to miss, with some devastating funny moments but tired music.  
McClain, Journal American, felt museum piece worth see-  
ing, minor G & S with some moments of mirth and melody.  
Aston, WTS, cheered dandy show, a sturdy affair that brims  
with fun and tunes. WTS joined several others in suggest-  
ing it be added to American Savoyards repertory.



STAGEHANDS

75th BIRTHDAY

DINNER

3000 attended Diamond Jubilee Dinner of the Thea-  
trical Stage Employees Union at the Waldorf Astoria, NYC,  
May 14. Special citations were given by the union to NYC  
Major Wagner as a great friend of labor, Mary Martin for  
outstanding and distinguished achievement in the theatre,  
and the Metropolitan Opera for cultural contributions to  
the entertainment industry. Local 1, Theatrical Protective  
Union of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Em-  
ployees was organized in 1886 and is the first union in the  
AFL-CIO to celebrate its 75th anniversary.



THEATRE

BOOK

COMMENTS

"Modern French Theatre From Giraudoux to Becket"  
by Jacques Guicharnaud ( Yale Univ Press \$4.75 ) recomm-  
ended by Clurman, Times Books Review, as one of the most  
important studies of what the best French dramatists of the  
past 30 years have been writing, thinking, feeling. Book by  
current Associate Professor of French at Yale is not so  
much an introduction, but rather a philosophic and learned  
postscript. To appreciate it fully one must be a to a certain  
extent familiar with the playwrights he discussed. It is a  
good guide to extending repertory of college and community  
theatres, critic also noted.



# GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT



# PROS & CONS BY TMK

**TAX & SUBSIDY...** NY theatre's stifling cost-price squeeze will become tighter and the casualties more numerous unless there is either a subsidy or tax relief, comments World Telegram & Sun editorial picking the latter as by far the better answer... Federal tax relief for theatre would be an indirect subsidy on the grounds that the theatre is part of the nation's culture, warns Chapman, News. Such action might lead to a FDC--Federal Drama Commission --that could close up most of the current plays with "unbelievable families" for not being uplifting... Conceivably some day there will be an economic survey of the theatre that will not pussyfoot around the issue of union featherbedding, dreams Gould, Times. This would at least give a controversial lift to the perennial analyses of the fabulous invalid... Plain common horse sense, as exhibited by the two producers who brought in current musicals for \$200,000 instead of \$500,000, needed rather than tax abatement, points out Gaver, UPI-World Telegram & Sun.

**COLUMN TIPS...** Theatre Guild has bid sight unseen on the new play being written by Max Lerner and Clifford Odets, notes Lyons, Post... Marlene Dietrich may star in Brecht's Mother Courage next season, hears Kilgallen, Journal American... David Merrick is trying to sign Gower Champion to a life-time director contract, items Heimer, Mirror.

**LINCOLN CENTER CON...** Not much is to be gained from a system that not only maintains but increases high admission fees while reducing seating capacity, complains Lang, Herald Tribune. Music critic fears that what issues from the great cultural supermarket is a genteel conception that envisages a stable, comfortable, fashionable, expensive, well-meaning, harmless sort of musical culture.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...** Betting on horses or playing the stock market is much cheaper than investing in Broadway shows, adds up Coleman, Mirror... Return of Becket makes Watts, Post, wonder again if he should have voted for it as the best new foreign play of the season.

**DRAMA MAIL BOX...** Many letters from heads of families who want their children to become drama fans, but cannot afford the current tariffs received by Coleman, Mirror... Reduction of theatre owner percentages and/or theatre real estate tax reductions urged by Herald Tribune reader as another way to cut high ticket prices... Kerr, Herald Tribune, praised by a reader of paper for constructive review of Gallows Humor.

**SECOND GUESSES...** The Blacks is Genet's most distinguished work, and his complex and disturbing ritual drama is one of the most exciting events of the entire theatrical season, concludes Watts, Post... The excitement of the Genet play is due in large measure to the spell and the magic and the endless wisps of meanings which suggest many things to as many people, details McClain, Journal American... Kerr, Herald Tribune, rated first act stunning, but feared the second act of The Blacks is literally an act of exhaustion and disenchantment.

Porgy and Bess is a thrilling, very moving revival of the modern opera with all of the leading players in fine voice and with exciting, brilliant renditions by chorus and orchestra. The bigness of the original concept and of the current production make the giant City Center stage seem tiny for the very first time. The changing groups and forms of the chorus used for visual effect bring originality to the American classic. Each and every principal has a magnificent voice, and most are excellent actors as well. The result is another City Center gem which deserves a sustained run, not a mere two weeks.

The ever growing success of the Phoenix Theatre and the City Center is a result of the fine productions presented by experienced staffs and sell-out audiences at \$3.95 top. The loyal followings of each expect and usually get top productions, and even accept a lesser effort now and then. Advance subscriptions provide production funds for the season. The student programs of both organizations bring in busloads of eager young theatre fans who will be ready and able to continue the habit of theatre-going if the price is right. The recent Lincoln Center announcement that theatre ticket prices for the Repertory Theatre will be higher than current ticket prices is bad news for all, but especially to the Phoenix and City Center trained audiences.

The "Non-Committee Do It Yourself" action methods of two producers who have done something about cutting NY theatre ticket prices must be applauded by everyone concerned. While some producers are busy fighting the Battle of City Hall to get tax cuts of 30c per ticket, Fiorello! producers have literally cut box-office prices in half. The result was evident the very first week with the gross at the Broadway almost equal to the previous week's gross at the smaller playhouse at the higher prices. In addition a heavy daily advance sales backs up the public approval of the lower ticket prices. It is impossible to believe that a tax cut that is to be passed on to craft union pension plans will result in any sizeable rush to the box-office. The \$1 balcony tickets that will be available for Kean next fall may be the solution to the strange status problem that found customers refusing to buy \$2.90 balcony seats. These characters still will not go to the balcony for fear some one may see them there, but a whole new group of theatre fans may be found via the new method.

Plays should be judged on their final day of out-of-town tryout production when everything is polished and when everyone is relaxed, Sam Levene, Devil's Advocate, told an World Telegram & Sun interviewer. In the long history of the Actor Vs. Critic verbal war this is one of the most original ideas yet expressed. There are many actors and authors who would gladly pay for one way tickets out of town for certain NY critics.

Who says Off Broadway isn't Important? Broadway producers who shun Off Broadway now want 40% of the future Off Broadway revival rights of authors.





OUTER  
BROADWAY  
THEATRE  
LETTER

### College Theatre

Univ of Denver Summer Drama and Music Festivals Jun 19-Aug 18 to commemorate Civil War Centennial with productions of John Brown's Body, Our American Cousin, and Early Dawn opera. Next summer Moss Hart will be playwright-in-residence during the summer session.

Swarthmore, Penn, College to construct new Paul Pearson Theatre, named in honor of late professor of public speaking. NBC commentator Leon Pearson is head of fund raising committee.

Bury Me Not written for Beloit, Wisc, College Theatres in 1954 by Ronald Mitchell will be revived at Beloit Jun 9, 10, staged by Kirk Denmark. The Boy Friend was presented May 19-21 at Brooklyn, NY, College.

### Community Theatre

National Community Theatre Center, Univ of Wisconsin, Madison, to present four week summer seminar-conference Jun 20-Jul 14 on community theatre aspects of nature of community theatre, the director, technical production, theatre management and business. Edward Kamarck co-ordinator. Des Moines Community Theatre won Iowa state sales tax exemption.

### Shakespeare

Twelfth Night will be presented Jul 1-15 at outdoor Sylvan Theatre, Washington, D. C. for free performances with volunteer casts, Ellie Chamberlain producer.

### Road Shows

My Fair Lady ends 20 week Boston run. A Majority of One with Molly Picon started tour at Coconut Grove Playhouse, Miami. Toys in the Attic tour opens Oct 9 in Washington, D. C.

### Summer Playhouses

Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, Penn to present three tryouts this season---An Evening with S J Perelman starring Bert Lahr, A Whiff of Melancholy a new play by James Andrews with Ann Sheridan and Scott McKay, directed by Burgess Meredith, and The Interpreter a new political drama by Eric Rudd with Fred Clark, staged by Robert Livingston. Assn of Producing Artists will return for two week repertory program Jul 24.

Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera Co season opens Jul 3 with Martha Raye in Calamity Jane. Billion Dollar Baby musical by Adolph Green-Betty Comden to be revived this year at Dallas State Fair. Gypsy with Mitzi Green Jun 6 at Lambertville, NJ. Sex-Tette by and with Mae West to debut Jul 25 at Warren, Ohio.

### US Repertory

Theatre Guild American Repertory Co presentation of The Miracle Worker will not be presented during Paris run, bowing to demands of Lars Schmidt who will soon present his own French version there. European tour closes Jun 17 in Paris. After a month's rest the same company headed by Helen Hayes will open a three month visit of Latin America Aug 13 in Venezuela.

A group of Actors Studio members will present three programs of repertory in a Latin American tour starting Jul 11 in Buenos Aires. Henry Weinstein-Lawrence Feldman will sponsor the troupe headed by Viveca Lindfors, Betty Field, Rita Gam, Morgan Sterne, Ben Piazza, William Daniels. Tad Danielewski will direct the bills of--a twin-bill of scenes from Suddenly Last Summer and Sweet Bird of Youth, a twin bill of Miss Julie and The Zoo Story, and I am A Camera. Productions will debut Jun 28 at Falmouth, Mass and Jul 3 at Westport, Conn. Country Playhouse.

### Award Dept

Joan Lancaster and Gene Coleman picked as 1961 Barter Theatre, Abington, Va. Award winners by Hume Cronyn, Big Fish, Little Fish. They were chosen from 70 who auditioned for one minute each.

### Spring Repertory

Actors Workshop, San Francisco, repertory company praised for its taste for so many varieties of theatrical expression and for its capacity to give them conviction on stage by Taubman, Times. Misalliance, King Lear, A Touch of the Poet and The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter presented in repertory all highly approved by the traveling NYC reviewer. This theatre provides San Francisco with continuity, a point of view and a program of plays that routine commercial channels ignore. Critic noted that like Alley Theatre, Houston, the Actors Workshop is being accepted reluctantly by snobbish local theatre-goers whose eyes are fastened on Broadway.

### Legal Dept

Rep William Fitz Ryan (D-NY) introduced bill in House of Representatives to eliminate 10% federal admission tax on dramatic and musical performances. Peggy Wood, ANTA, Dick Moore, Equity and Eddie Weston, Equity, testified in Washington before House sub-committee group on National Cultural Development and Federal Advisory Council of the Arts bills.

### London

The Sound of Music with Jean Bayliss and Roger Dann opened at Palace. Prince Charles Theatre, new 500 seat playhouse to be constructed at Leicester Square & Lisle St to be completed Sept 1963. The Bird of Time by Peter Mayne May 31 at Savoy. The Rehearsal moves May 29 from Globe to Queens. Dazzling Prospect with Margaret Rutherford Jun 1 at Globe. The Merchant of Venice with Robert Harris, Barbara Leigh-Hunt staged by Peter Potter May 30 at Old Vic.

### Dublin Festival

Dublin International Festival Sept 10-24 to feature Siobhan McKenna in Brecht's Saint Joan of the Stockyards.



"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week. "CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.

